

Briefing of Families and Issuance of Housing Choice Vouchers

A. RENTAL ASSISTANCE BRIEFINGS

Purpose of the Briefing:

The issuance of Housing Choice Vouchers must adhere to the dollar limitations set by the budget.

Families to be initially issued Housing Choice Vouchers are required to attend briefing sessions conducted either in group sessions or individually.

The purpose of the briefing is to go over the Voucher holder's packet of materials in order to fully inform the family about the program so that s/he will be able to discuss it with potential participating owners and to inform the family of their rights and responsibilities.

Briefing Attendance Requirement:

All families are required to attend the briefing when they are initially issued a Housing Choice Voucher. No Voucher will be awarded unless the household representative, or his/her proxy, which has been designated in writing, has attended a briefing.

Families will be notified that if they are unable to attend the briefing, it will be rescheduled, provided the family contacts the OCHA within 15 calendar days of their notification of said briefing time and date.

Failure to attend a scheduled briefing will result in a notice being sent to the family, with a requirement to respond within 15 calendar days. If the family responds to the notice, they are scheduled for the next briefing.

If the family does not respond to the notice, the family is sent a notice of ineligibility for failure to supply information needed for certification or recertification and will be removed from further consideration.

Format of the Briefing:

Briefings of Voucher holders are handled on a group or individual basis by a staff member. Families must report changes in circumstances, and changes will be recalculated. The family is requested to sign the Voucher at the briefing.

If group briefings are conducted, families are given an opportunity to ask questions.

General Policies

In addition to the briefing requirements to be covered determined by HUD regulations, the following items shall be discussed thoroughly in the briefing session.

Collection of the Security Deposit and any special terms provided for the payment of the deposit shall be between Owner and Tenant. The OCHA is not responsible for damages or amount of Security Deposits for contracts after October 2, 1994.

Information shall be included to explain that rents are calculated by use of the Voucher Payment Standard in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. The OCHA shall also explain the Tenant's responsibilities regarding increased rent payments when a family elects to rent a property where the rent is more than the combined total of the Voucher subsidy allowed and their tenant payment in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

The conditions in the lease under which tenancy may be terminated by the owner and the conditions under which assistance for the program may be terminated by the OCHA will be explained.

The OCHA will inform families that the OCHA may refer suspected program abuse to the Orange County District Attorney's office for investigation. Families will be informed that the filing of criminal charges may result.

Assistance to Housing Choice Voucher Holders:

Families who require additional assistance during their search may call the OCHA staff. In addition, the OCHA will provide a list of landlords interested in participating in the program with vacant units.

Housing Choice Voucher holders are notified at their briefing session that the OCHA periodically updates the listing of available housing and are invited to pick up the update from the office. Additional assistance is provided as needed upon request.

The OCHA will assist families with negotiations with owners in the Housing Choice Voucher Program if requested by families. The OCHA will also provide any other recommendations relative to the families' needs for housing.

Household Obligations under the Housing Choice Voucher Program:

Generally, under the Housing Choice Voucher Program, the relationship between tenant and landlord is the same as in the private housing market.

However, once a household receives Housing Choice Voucher Assistance, s/he has the following additional obligations. The assisted family must comply with the obligations described in the Code of Federal Regulations.

Procedurally, there are several concerns in meeting these obligations.

The family must:

- Find a rental unit, which is the correct size (for the Housing Choice Voucher Program within Voucher Standard prescribed by regulation);

- Submit and sign the HUD-required forms such as the HUD 9886 Authorization for Release form:

- Turn in proper forms to the OCHA within 120 days so that the unit may be approved;

- Keep appointments set by the OCHA for determination of continued eligibility;

- Notify the OCHA in a timely manner of changes in household composition and changes in income and assets.

- Report changes specified in the Administrative Plan and notified of at the briefing or recertification. Any increase in income which results in a less than \$20.00 difference in Tenant Portion of Rent, may not be processed if the total family income including this additional income does not exceed the income limit (very low income limit).

B. SECURITY DEPOSIT REQUIREMENTS

Pet deposits are not part of the security deposit, and damages by pets will not be allowed as part of a damage or special claim.

The OCHA is not responsible for damages on contracts entered into after October 2, 1994; the amount, method of collection and distribution of Security Deposits, if any, are strictly a matter between Owners and Tenants.

C. RENTAL ASSISTANCE ISSUANCE

At the close of the briefing session, each household will receive a Housing Choice Voucher, which is a contract between the OCHA and the family, specifying the rights and responsibilities of each party.

The number of Vouchers issued must ensure that the OCHA stay at 100% (or as close as possible) lease-up. Therefore, the OCHA should maintain monthly reports to determine when applications should be taken, the number of Vouchers to be issued based on turnover statistics, and whether or not the OCHA should over-issue (issue more Vouchers than in the Annual Contributions Contract or the Budget for Vouchers.)

Expirations:

The Housing Choice Voucher is valid for a period of one-hundred and twenty calendar days from the date of issuance. Prior to expiration, the family may contact the OCHA to inquire about assistance and the OCHA will provide the family assistance in locating suitable housing.

The family must submit a Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) within this time period unless an extension has been granted by the OCHA.

Extensions:

A family may request an extension of the Voucher time period. All requests for extensions should be received at least 15 calendar days prior to the expiration date of the Voucher and must provide verification for the medical, extenuating circumstances or other reason that the tenant has not been able to utilize the Voucher over the last 120 days. The OCHA will review this request and may approve or deny said in writing. The client will be informed of the opportunities offered in Chapter 23 (Complaints and Appeals) in this notification.